

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

ot God's word, and animate them to act rightly by the example of a good life ; and, because I have not done this as I might, surely I am guilty." ¹

These were Bartolommeo's last doubts. He became her most ardent follower and champion, and frequently acted as her confessor and that of all her spiritual company. A certain Franciscan friar, Fra Lazzarino of Pisa, was one of the first who followed him to her feet. An eloquent and popular preacher, a man of considerable learning, though by no means an exemplary Franciscan as far as his vow of poverty was concerned, Lazzarino was at that time lecturing on philosophy at Siena. He hated the very name of Catherine, abused her both in public and in private, and persecuted her friends. Knowing the devotion to her of Fra Bartolommeo, who was then lecturing occasionally on the *Sentences* of Peter the Lombard, he tried to make him unpopular with the students. Finding all his efforts against Catherine's reputation were useless, he began to preach publicly against her, and, when that failed, decided to visit her, under pretence of devotion, in order to catch her in her speech. With this intention, he came on the evening of the feast of St. Catherine, Virgin and Martyr, to Bartolommeo's cell, and asked him to bring him to her ; and the Dominican, thinking his heart was touched, with leave of Fra Tommaso della Fonte, accompanied him to the house. Let Bartolommeo himself relate what followed :—

" When we entered her holy cell, Fra Lazzarino sat down upon a stool; she seated herself at his feet upon the floor, while I took a seat apart on the opposite side. Both kept silence for a while. At length he began : * I have heard such good report of thy holiness and that thou art endowed by the Lord with the understanding of the Scriptures, that I have come to thee, hoping to hear somewhat to edify and comfort my soul.' But she answered : ° I am glad at your coming, for I believe the Lord has sent you in order that you, who have the knowledge of the holy Scriptures with which you daily feed the souls of the people, may be moved by charity to comfort my poor little soul; and so, for the love ¹

Contestatio «'/. coll. 1346, 1347.